

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
June 29, 2006

YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL CAREERS INSTITUTE

File No. 06-059
Project Manager: David Hayes

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse an amount not to exceed \$30,000 to the National Hispanic Environmental Council for purposes of conducting its inaugural California Youth Environmental Education and Training Institute, an education, training and careers program designed to teach and expose minority and other underserved youth to a wide variety of environmental and conservation issues, regional park resources, local projects, role models and career possibilities.

LOCATION: City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Environmental Education

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location and Site Map

Exhibit 2: Photographs

Exhibit 3: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to the National Hispanic Environmental Council for purposes of conducting its inaugural California Youth Environmental Education and Training Institute, as described in the accompanying staff recommendation.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Section 31119 of the Public Resources Code, regarding educational projects.
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2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
 3. The National Hispanic Environmental Council is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U. S. Internal Revenue Code and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff is requesting that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of an amount not to exceed thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to the National Hispanic Environmental Council to conduct its inaugural California Youth Environmental Education and Training Institute. This education and training program is designed as an outreach effort to teach and expose minority and other youth who are underrepresented in the environmental fields to a wide variety of environmental and conservation issues, regional park resources, local projects, role models and career possibilities, with a focus on coastal and watershed issues in Southern California. Students will be selected on a competitive basis, with an emphasis on academic achievement.

The NHEC has extensive experience conducting environmental conferences and workshops and has held an annual student internship focusing on environmental issues and careers over the past five years. Previous programs were on a national basis. The proposed ten day California Youth Environmental Training Institute (YETI) would be NHEC’s first regional program and also its inaugural program in California. The institute will draw upon the extensive surge in Southern California’s environmental planning and habitat restoration projects currently underway, and expose participants to a wide variety of urban and park resources within the Los Angeles and the southern California region.

The student Institute has four components: 1) Environmental education coursework that will teach basic through advanced environmental and natural resource concepts; 2) Environmental career counseling teaching students about the varied careers in the environment, natural resources, and conservation fields; 3) Environmental college awareness which will identify resource curricula offered at colleges and encourage students to apply to and attend these colleges and universities; 4) The use of Latino/minority environmental educators and environmental professionals as volunteer “role models”, where possible.

The intensive ten-day experience will consist of a schedule of classroom sessions, hands on science based outdoor field exercises in both urban and wilderness areas, individual and group presentations, team building exercises, and career counseling from role-models drawn from a wide variety of environmental and science professions. During the Institute, the Conservancy’s mission and projects will be spotlighted along with those of other project sponsors. Up to fifty participants will be selected on a competitive basis from an open application pool of students who have shown academic achievement, and have demonstrated interest and experience in the environmental fields. The Institute is designed for, though not limited to, minority youth who are underrepresented in the environmental fields, ages 16 through 18. Where possible, instruction is provided by Hispanic/minority educators, working with a volunteer group of role-models who are working in the environmental fields as professionals from many disciplines, who share their technical expertise, experience and different cultural heritages. This program

promotes diversity in a way that “ensures that they [the students] not only learn from the curriculum, but learn from each other”.

The National Hispanic Environmental Council is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1995 to educate, engage the communities of color on environmental and sustainable development issues; to encourage Hispanics to actively work to preserve and protect the environment and to actively assist Hispanics and other minorities to pursue career, business, educational, and policy opportunities in the environmental and natural resources fields. These purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which in section 31119 authorizes the Conservancy to undertake educational projects relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement and maintenance of coastal resources.

Site Description:

The project will be located in the Los Angeles area, which offers access to an array of topography and ecosystems, and provides opportunities for students to experience both the beauty of California’s natural resources and the problems currently facing the state. Students will be taught in locations that illustrate a variety of environmental, natural resource, and conservation issues important in California, allowing them to see first hand how and where issues intersect in this part of the state. Coastal wetland and watershed sites will be featured. Possible sites include the Santa Monica Mountains and Malibu State Park; details and other specific sites are now being finalized with federal, state sponsors and local environmental organizations.

Project History:

The National Hispanic Environmental Council was a panelist organization in the Southern California Wetland Recovery Program Symposium session: “The Colors of Green, Diversifying the Environmental Movement”, spring 2006. The panel discussion explored ways in which a higher diversity participation can be achieved and highlighted a few examples on a local, and in on a regional scale. Coincidentally to the WRP symposium, NHEC recently opened a southern California office, and has participated in the newly established WRP Diversity Committee. This committee is working to help develop strategies to improve outreach and inclusive participation by underserved communities in WRP projects and activities, and to better reflect the diverse populations of southern California.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$30,000
California State Parks Foundation	10,000
California State Water Resources Control Board	5,000
California Wild heritage Campaign	5,000
Total Project Cost	\$50,000

The expected sources of funds for this project are the FY03 appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account in the Environmental License Plate Fund, which may be used for any purpose consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Section 31119(a)(1) of the Public Resources Code states: "The conservancy may undertake educational projects and programs for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12, inclusive, relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement, and maintenance of coastal resources, and may award grants to nonprofit organizations . . .for those purposes." The proposed project will directly engage high school students in an intensive 10-day environmental education program with a focus on coastal resources.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** This project is receiving extensive support from several California State and Federal agencies. In addition, support letters submitted from program participants in other states have been included in Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** The proposed project will take place in southern California, Los Angeles county coastal watersheds including the Santa Monica Recreation area, Malibu State Park and urbanized areas that affect important coastal resources.
5. **Need:** Difficulty finding funding for this inaugural educational program is due in part to governmental cutbacks and a decline in private foundation funding. Without Conservancy

funding this program would not have sufficient funds for this year and its startup of a California program would be deferred for an undermined time.

6. **Greater-than-local interest:** If authorized, this program will serve schools not only in the Los Angeles area but throughout southern California, and establish a broad-based outreach effort to promote environmental education and encourage minority students to seek further training, education and careers in the environmental professions.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** NHEC seeks to commence its 10-day Youth Environmental Careers Institute program during July 2006. Conservancy funding is needed to enable this to take place.
8. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above. In-kind services will consist of NHEC administration, Institute coordination services. Other contributions of in-kind services and support will be provided in the form of career role models from the following: California State Parks, National Parks Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Aquarium of the Pacific (tour entry fee weaver), South Coast Air Quality Management District (site tour and use of Laboratory). Nonprofit in-kind contributions will also be provided by the Nature Conservancy in the form of access to land with special habitats for field training purposes.
12. **Readiness:** The NHEC has started preparing its program, has confirmed commitments from State and Federal agencies, and will initiate the student selection process and hiring instructors for the Institute once funding is secured.
15. **Cooperation:** The NHEC has secured the cooperation of over ten State and Federal resources agencies, Statewide private foundations and environmental organizations to provide role models volunteers, lodging, transportation, field tours and tour instructors in order to carry out the educational program.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed the educational program does not have the potential to result in any physical change in the environment and is therefore not considered a “project” under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq.), as defined in 14Cal.Code of Regulations Section 15378.